

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: **Karl Fredrickson, Director of Public Works & Utilities**
Marvin Krout, Planning Director

SUBJECT: *Recommendation on Draft 2030 Future Service Limit*

DATE: September 14, 2005

COPIES: City Council, County Board
Mayor Seng
Development Community list

BACKGROUND

For the past months we have discussed potential expansion of the 2025 Future Service Limit, as we begin a minor update of the Comprehensive Plan and look toward the year 2030. While there are some merits to adding land to the capacity of the 2025 service area (Tier I), there are still very relevant concerns about funding the cost of constructing the additional infrastructure needed to serve the potential growth areas. Equally important are concerns about maintaining existing and new infrastructure and providing a satisfactory level of service to the existing city limits as well as the new growth areas.

The Comprehensive Plan isn't a static document. There will be several major and minor updates of the Plan prior to 2030, each offering the opportunity to review the community's growth and need for additional area. Since the city is developing less than a square mile a year, the 41 additional square miles in the 2025 Future Service Limit provides adequate space for the next 20 to 25 years. Even subtracting all floodplain or flood prone land, there is still 32 square miles of undeveloped land.

The Planning Commission has determined that the Plan's Vision is sound. The Community for decades has focused on contiguous, planned growth in multiple directions around the City, while maintaining the viability of existing neighborhoods and businesses. The following are some important aspects of the Vision of the Comprehensive Plan as it relates to this minor update and the decision on the Future Service Limit:

Community – The Plan is more than a document for public officials. The goal is to maintain the sense of community within Lancaster County and within each of the cities, towns, villages and neighborhoods within the county. The “One Community Vision” states “the fundamental challenge for our Comprehensive Plan: to retain the characteristics of our individual parts while accommodating change within an increasingly interdependent world.”

Stability – The Comprehensive Plan is more than a vision of the future. It is a document that is used daily by public and private individuals and companies to guide decisions and investments. It is used to develop the 6 Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for City improvements. Often these construction

plans take years to develop and many more to construct. There needs to be some continuity in direction and priorities from year to year in order for improvements to be implemented. Constant dramatic changes in direction and priorities wastes time and ultimately reduces what a community can accomplish. The emphasis is on maintaining the Community's Vision for the future, while assessing if there are potential improvements in the overall Plan. The location of growth areas needs to be, as best possible, predictable in the short and long term to develop a "business plan" for providing and maintaining infrastructure, providing service and developing capital improvement plans. Steady guaranteed revenue streams are needed to afford any of the scenarios.

Opportunity – While the overall direction for the Plan has remained stable over the years there does need to be flexibility to react to changes in market conditions and significant unexpected opportunities. Lincoln is in constant competition with other communities to retain and attract businesses. In a few occasions this may mean being flexible to capture an opportunity, while still being true to the values of the community and maintaining services to the existing community. This minor update of the Plan has searched to see if there are a few areas that could be added to the Future Service Limit – opportunities for development, while still falling within the goals of the plan and without stretching already limited resources.

Affordability – The Plan strives to be visionary, but also fiscally prudent. When the Plan was approved in 2002 it was with the understanding that the past means of financing improvements would not be able to keep up with maintenance and all the improvements needed to realize the Plan for 2025. The past three years has been spent trying to reach community consensus on a plan to pay for infrastructure and services. Some progress has been made, but the full financing picture is not yet complete, and the statutory authorization for one aspect – impact fees – should be decided by the end of this year. Until the whole picture is determined and implemented, major new priorities and costs should be avoided, unless other improvements are eliminated.

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Public Works and Utilities Departments are in consensus that our first choice is Scenario 1 which retains the 2025 future service limit. This scenario does not increase infrastructure costs while providing adequate land for growth. This scenario also encourages more efficient use of the land while minimizing the need for additional new infrastructure.

However, there are a few additional areas that will provide opportunities for Lincoln, while implementing the vision of the Plan, and in many cases benefit from already planned infrastructure improvements. No area comes without some cost, but infrastructure improvements to serve these areas are relatively minor. In addition, these areas continue to reinforce the multiple direction growth; a goal that continues to be realized as construction takes places all over Lincoln.

Focusing all the future growth in one direction as in Scenario 3 would be a radical shift in that Vision. Providing infrastructure for development in multiple directions provides the opportunity to the meet many and varying needs of citizens. Some persons prefer to live closer to their job, a certain school or other locations throughout the city. While there are some financial benefits and ease of operation to growth in only one area, that type of growth does not provide flexibility in meeting the needs nor the interests of all residents.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Add about 3 ½ square miles (2 ½ vacant and out of floodplain) in several areas including:

- ⊖ Northwest, subarea A and part of C, south of Highway 34 from N. W 48th to the west
- ⊖ Northeast, subarea A from 84th to 112th, Cornhusker Highway to Fletcher Ave
- ⊖ West, including three subareas: 1) West Haines, subarea A and B, along West Old Cheney from Folsom to past Coddington, 2) West Middle, part of subarea A, about N. W. 70th, from I-80 to West O Street and, 3) S. W. 40th and West A Street

Northwest: About 770 acres of land contiguous to Arnold Heights/ Airport West area. Would only include land that is below 1,280 elevation due to costs for water booster district to serve small area above that elevation. This proposal would only use about ½ of the 1,500 acres capacity once Oak Creek sanitary sewer line is upgraded. Some minor water and sewer pipe extensions will be necessary here. The area is split by N. W. 48th Street, which the City already plans to upgrade to 4 lanes. Mostly provides area for residential and small portion of potential commercial/ industrial development. Outside of all airport noise zones. Some of the land is the n Inner Approach zone of Airport, but this only limits height of buildings, which should not interfere with development. Some land is next to the former Ammunition Depot, now owned by the Airport Authority, and Nine Mile Prairie. New development may need to provide a buffer next to both of these existing uses.

Northeast: Includes existing industrial uses such as Novartis as part of the total area of 750 acres. The new Stevens Creek trunk line to be done by end of 2006 will make service to this area viable. Would require minor sanitary sewer line to serve this subarea by gravity. Water service relatively easy, though no water mains in place at time. There is road capacity in four lane Cornhusker Highway, but Fletcher and N. 98th St. are gravel at this time. The 98th St. corridor from Fletcher to Cornhusker could provide a good light industrial employment location. Primary uses in this subarea could be light industrial, corporate offices and commercial. Area is separated from city by nearly one mile wide floodplain, though a few existing businesses are already located in the floodplain. Potential for near term annexation of industrially zoned land along Cornhusker Highway corridor.

West: A total of 840 acres which Includes 3 separate smaller areas in Haines Branch and Middle Creek basins. 1) Adds about 485 acres since the adjacent land north of West Old Cheney and east of S. W. 12th Street was already in Tier I. This additional land could be served by planned infrastructure improvements for water, sanitary sewer and road to serve adjacent lands, with minor extensions. 2) Adds about 125 potential acres of industrial land along the north and east side of Middle Creek between West O Street and Interstate 80. 3) Includes about 230 acres at S. W. 40th and West A Street that could be served depending on the design in process on a sanitary sewer relief line. If it is cost effective to build and size the sewer to serve this additional acreage, then this area would be added to the Plan. This would add primarily land suitable for urban residential development. Some additional acres of floodplain and Burlington Northern rail lines would also be added, but without any development potential.

The addition of any land outside of the land currently in Tier I, in the Haines Branch, Cardwell Branch, or Upper Salt Creek basins will require the construction of a new Southwest Treatment Plant or Storage Facility sometime before 2030. This facility would provide long term flexibility for growth in Tier II and III and could be sited in the next year. By having a southwest facility, it opens up treatment capacity at Theresa Street Plant to serve other drainage basins to the west and northwest.

Large Employer Opportunity Areas

In addition to the land being proposed for expansion of the 2025 Future Service Limit, there are a few more areas that might have potential in the future. This is in keeping with the Vision of the Plan “to maintain a healthy climate for locally owned and operated commerce and trade, to promote the recruitment of new companies, and to provide a variety of training and employment opportunities.” In general, these locations may hold interest for some large “primary” employers even though they may have limited access, noise impacts or limited infrastructure. Employers may find them desirable due to having large tracts of available land, highway visibility and low land costs, while still being relatively close to Lincoln, utilities and highway/ interstate interchanges.

These areas would remain on the horizon, perhaps not developing at all during the 2030 planning period. Improvements to serve this land would not be included in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). However, if a large employer selected one of these sites, the City may need to amend the CIP to provide infrastructure within one year.

These three areas of 100 to 400 acres that are contiguous to the city limits could be added to the Future Service Limit relatively quickly and at a relatively low cost if a major employer selected one of these locations.

- ' Highway 34 on the north side from N. W. 40th to 56th (Highway 79): Has highway visibility and access to four lane highway. LES is reviewing possible routes for transmission line across property or along southern edge.
- ' N. W. 31st and Highway 34: Also has highway visibility and access to four lane highway, plus access to a rail line. Since land is less than a mile from the end of a general aviation runway and is in 65 to greater than 70 DNL noise zone, it is unsuitable for residential development. Unless this site is selected by a major employer, presumably an industrial or warehouse/distribution use, it should remain undeveloped.
- ' N. 40th and I-80: Questions remain as to how this area could be served by gravity sewer. There is a significant amount of land over 1,190 elevation which will require a water booster district. Also questions about permitting development on land that naturally drains into to Little Salt Creek, where the Salt Creek Tiger Beetle and rare saline wetlands are located. Primary focus should be on area closer N. 56th Street and I-80 interchange that is not in Little Salt Creek basin. City is meeting with developer of site to resolve issues.

These two areas could not be served in the near term, but once infrastructure is extended to adjacent land in the longer term, they could provide potential sites:

- ' N. 98th from Fletcher, area south of Fletcher may be of interest and have needed infrastructure, once land to the north of Fletcher is developed.
- ' S. 38th to S. 54th Street, from Bennet Road to the South Beltway: small area that is close to South Beltway interchange. City should reserve some land next to the Beltway for potential major employers rather than having all the land used for highway commercial.